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January 18, 2008

Merger of Arizona Geological Survey and Mining Department Proposed

Legislation was introduced late on Thursday, January 17, to merge the Arizona Department of Mines and Mineral Resources (ADMMR) into the Arizona Geological Survey (AZGS). In addition, the Arizona Geographic Information Council (AGIC) would be transferred from the State Land Department to the AZGS.

ADMMR includes the popular Arizona Mining and Mineral Museum in Phoenix, which will become part of the combined agency. HB2584 was introduced by Rep. Theresa Ulmer of Yuma. If approved by the state legislature, and signed by the governor, the merger will take effect December 31, 2008. The agency will be headquartered in the AZGS office in Tucson, while the mineral resources program and museum will continue to operate in its present Phoenix location.

State Geologist and AZGS Director, Dr. Lee Allison, said that the two agencies have worked together to cooperate, share resources and avoid possible overlap. "We were not seeking this merger, but we do support it. The merged agencies should have some economies of scale and be better able to meet the state's needs for good reliable information on minerals, mining, and geology," he said. "Also, the Mining and Mineral Museum is one of the premier such institutions in the western U.S. but has lacked the resources to reach its full potential," Allison said. "Arizona is the number one mining state in the nation and deserves a world-class museum that showcases the role and impact of minerals in our economy and history. I think we can make the Mining and Mineral Museum one of the most exciting and premier attractions in Phoenix."

The Arizona Mining and Mineral Museum traces its origin to the first Arizona Fair, held in November of 1884, and with its companion program, the Mineral Information Center, provides industry, federal, state, and local agencies, and the public with information about mining in Arizona. The Arizona Geological Survey grew out of the Office of the Territorial Geologist that started in 1888, became a founding component of the University of Arizona in 1891, and was known as the Arizona Bureau of Mines through most of the 20th century. In 1988, the legislature moved the AZGS out of the university, making it an independent state agency.

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